

BEST COPY

AVAILABLE

Sanitized - Approved For Release : CIA-RDP75-00

National Security Council Is Charged With 'Inertia'

Ex-Pentagon Aide Warns Ponderous Procedures Block New Ideas

By JACK RAYMOND

WASHINGTON, May 8—Congress published today testimony that National Security Council procedures were ponderous and were handicapped by a "strong inertia against initiating new policies."

The council is the President's highest advisory unit. It discusses major problems, from domestic issues to military strategy, in secret. The President is its chairman.

The critical testimony was by Dr. James A. Perkins, vice president of the Carnegie Corporation and a former Pentagon official. It was given in a closed session April 25 before the Senate subcommittee on national policy machinery, and cleared by the White House for release today.

The Senate group, under the chairmanship of Henry M. Jackson, Democrat of Washing-

ton, testified by Robert H. Lovett, former Secretary of Defense, who suggested that the council's practices and purposes be modified.

Dr. Perkins also expressed agreement with the points put forward in an article by Robert R. Bowie, former head of the State Department Policy Committee. Mr. Bowie charged that much high-level Government machinery was ineffective.

When he was a member of the so-called Gaither Committee and came to Washington on that mission, Dr. Perkins said, "it seemed to us quite clear that the Government did not fully realize the Soviet threat

as it was described at the Pentagon and the Central Intelligence Agency.

He referred to the committee named for its co-chairman, H. Rowan Gaither, former president of the Ford Foundation, which drew up a secret report at President Eisenhower's request in 1957.

The report has never been made public, but it is understood to have drawn a gloomy picture of United States defenses, and to have recommended building a network of fall-out shelters.

Dr. Perkins' reference to the Gaither report touched a sensitive issue. Edmund E. Penta, a Republican minority counsel of the subcommittee, interpreted to emphasize that the report was still secret and that the testimony would have to be deleted in subsequent publication.

Dr. Perkins assured the panel he had no intention of

talking about what was in the report.

"I am saying, however, that when we first came down, it seemed to us that the nature of the [Soviet] threat was not considered," he said.

The report did not prompt any action to deal with the Soviet threat, Dr. Perkins observed.

"As a matter of fact," he said, "I said then, and I say again, that whatever words of wisdom we may have put in that document would have largely been wasted if the Russians had not so fully cooperated by sending up a missile one week before we submitted our report, or a satellite, and another one some weeks afterward. We were well bracketed."

"But the point needs to be made that the existing machinery did not seem to bring to the surface in the right way the

Russian threat to American

Some pieces of this puzzle were known, but you know you can know the parts but they do not have all impact on you if you do not pray over them and look at them in a fresh way."

Under questioning by Senator Jackson, Dr. Perkins made these points:

"To the extent that the council works on reaching agreement among operating agencies for overall policies, it does well.

"To the extent that it is expected to be a medium for developing fresh ideas and debating innovations, it does not do well under existing methods.

Dr. Perkins emphasized that he was not being critical of President Eisenhower's conduct as head of the council. He said he was discussing the "presidency and not the President."

"I think if I were to make a general judgment about the

N. S. C., it is that the President has not received from the normal N. S. C. routine the kind of sharp debate, the clear difference of opinion, the new ideas that would require major modifications of program.

"However, I think that he has been well served by a group that has stabilized operations, and stabilized it by seeing to it that all parts of the Government are drawn into the process of policy planning."

Dr. Perkins suggested that "styles of administration" were significant in the assessment.

"I think my concern about this would be that currently, as one looks at our national security policy, I am impressed with the need for some fairly major re-thinking of some of the lines of policy."

He said he understood that twenty persons attended "standard" council meetings, members by statute, including the President, Vice President, State and Defense Secretaries

and the director of the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization. In addition, the special Assistant to the President for national security affairs and an executive secretary and deputy executive secretary regularly attend. "If the purpose of the council were to provide a system of 'validating policies,' it would be useful to increase the number of persons at the meetings," Dr. Perkins said.

"But if we are talking about a body that is going to advise the President, as Mr. Lovett suggested in his testimony, and as in a free and open way discuss substantial changes in policy, then I think the larger the number the less effective it is likely to be," he said.

Mr. Lovett, in his testimony at last Feb. 23, agreed with Senator Jackson that the council should confine itself to a few important issues. "The fewer the better," he commented.



Dr. James A. Perkins

ton, has been holding hearings on whether Government policy-making units are overly organized to meet the Soviet challenge and what measures are needed.

Dr. Perkins said the

CPYRIGHT

CPYRIGHT